

LOS PADRES CHAPTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB REQUEST TO ADD
WATERSHED THAT DRAINS INTO ORMOND BEACH LAGOON TO THE LIST
OF IMPAIRED WATERBODIES DEVELOPED PURSUANT TO SECTION 303(D)
OF FEDERAL CLEANWATER ACT.

PREPARED BY TREVOR SMITH (CONSERVATION CHAIR)

Dear Mr. Voong,

It has come to our attention that the Oxnard Industrial Drain, J Street Drain and the Bubbling Springs water way are not included on the 303(d) list for monitoring purposes. Both the Oxnard Industrial Drain and the J street drain are manmade concrete lined water ways that drain a large area of Oxnard's residential, industrial and agriculture runoff into the Ormond Beach Lagoon which is at the south End of Perkins Rd., adjacent to the HALACO Superfund site. The bubbling Springs waterway is more natural in appearance but at it's terminus is pumped into the same lagoon. The apparent effect of the discharge of these waterways is to fill the lagoon to a maximum level that registers 7 feet on a depth gauge next to the foot bridge and is sometimes in contact with the bridge's structure.

During a month of observations of the area the water level has never lowered but seems to gradually rise. There is no outlet to the ocean at this time. During heavy rains and high surf the lagoon does occasionally breach and drains into the ocean. We have been told by city officials that sometimes bulldozers are used to arbitrarily create a breach for drainage. However this practice has implications to wildlife that may have not been considered in the past.

The J street drain has appeared to be dry or slightly wet in the center over the past month of observation. However there appears to be observable amounts of trash and debris in the channel as it runs several miles north. We have heard for years about promises to install a storm drain filter device in drains such waterways. In past years we have observed large amounts of trash in the lagoon after heavy rainstorms.

The Oxnard Industrial Drain appears to be constantly full of water that is within two feet of the bottom of the bridges on Hueneme Road. Today we followed this water way inland to Pleasant Valley Road, about one mile north of Saviors Road. The Edison high tension Power lines cross Hueneme road at this point. We observed standing water that appeared to be at least one foot in depth. There were thick algae, much trash and a foul odor at this location. It is obvious that the Lagoon is full and the water is backed up miles inland. The water appears to be stagnant and most likely bacteria laden and a potential breeding ground for mosquitoes.

So far what we describe in layman's terms does not appear to pass the visual or smell test that are criteria of water quality permits. Apparently there is no professional testing of this waterway system. Sierra Club asks that the Waterboard makes the same visual observations and goes further to recommend testing and observation of this waterway system. We would be more than willing to act as your guides if you so desire.

We have more concerns about the Lagoon which is the receiving water of these manmade drainage channels. In addition to what has been described, the Abandoned HALACO building, paved area and Slag heap are all draining into the lagoon. The Slag Heap is in contact with the lagoon and Oxnard drain for hundreds of feet along the toe of the manmade mountain. As you know the site has been designated as a Superfund site and has been managed by Wayne Praskins for at least three years. During this time limited testing of the slag heap has found an abundance of heavy metals and radioactive isotopes (thorium).

When asked at a recent media event that we held that was publicized in newspapers and ABC TV, Mr. Praskins disclosed that no water samples or underwater sediment had been tested. Sierra Club asks that this testing be ordered as well as marine life tissue samples.

Sierra Club along with other groups has offered to clean up this visual blight of trash and debris but have been cautioned not to put volunteers into harms way i.e., inadvertent exposure to harmful toxins. How can anyone including city agencies put their workers and volunteers in harms way without the benefit of testing and disclosure of what hazards exist?

In conclusion The Los Padres Chapter of the Sierra Club joins all other groups in asking that this watershed, lagoon and Halaco site be added to the 303(d) list for the purpose of restoring the valuable habitat (ESHA) and eventually becoming safe for humans to maintain.

Sincerely,

Trevor Smith
Conservation Chair
Los Padres Chapter of the Sierra Club
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